



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE AGENTS ARREST SAN FRANCISCO MAN AT AIRPORT ON CHILD SEX TOURISM CHARGES

Case is first in Bay Area brought under recently passed PROTECT Act

SAN FRANCISCO – A 54-year-old San Francisco property manager has become the first person in the Bay Area to face federal criminal prosecution on child sex tourism charges under the provisions of the recently passed PROTECT Act.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents arrested Walter Schirra at the airport here early Saturday morning as he was about to board an Eva Airways flight to Thailand where he allegedly intended to solicit sex with underage boys.

A search of Schirra's luggage revealed photos of shirtless Asian boys, ages 12-14, large amounts of candy, as well as prescription drugs and other aids designed to enhance sexual pleasure. At the same time, ICE agents executed a search warrant at Schirra's residence, where they initially found approximately 15-20 images of child pornography on his computer. Two computers and various computer media were seized for further analysis.

"Sexual predators who exploit our virtual borders to prey on children will be identified and brought to justice," said Charles DeMore, San Francisco ICE special agent-in-charge. "ICE will use all of its law enforcement authorities to prevent the exploitation of children both here and abroad."

Schirra's arrest is the culmination of a three-month investigation by ICE, which began after agents became aware of his interest in traveling overseas for sexual contact with minors. During the investigation, agents discovered Schirra had traveled to Thailand in May 2004, and planned to travel there again in November 2004.

Schirra made his initial appearance this morning before a U.S. Magistrate in San Francisco. The formal charge against him is Travel in Interstate and Foreign Commerce for the Purpose of Engaging in Illicit Sexual Conduct with a Minor and Attempt to do so (18 U.S.C. 2423(b) and (e)).

The PROTECT Act substantially strengthened U.S. laws against child sex tourism by boosting the penalties in these types of cases and by modifying the burden of proof requirements for federal prosecutors to bring charges.

Schirra's arrest is part of Operation Predator, an ongoing ICE enforcement initiative launched last year to identify, investigate, arrest and, in the case of foreign nationals, deport child sex predators. Since the initiative began in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 4,300 individuals nationwide, including nearly 1,200 in California. In addition, foreign law enforcement officials acting on ICE leads have arrested more than 860 sexual predators in their respective countries.

Schirra is one of nine individuals nationwide charged under the new child sex tourism provisions of the PROTECT Act. The first case brought under the law involved a 70-year-old Seattle resident, Michael Lewis Clark, who was taken into custody by Cambodian authorities after traveling to that country to engage in sex with underage boys. In July 2004, a federal judge in Seattle sentenced Clark to 97 months in jail.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.